

BETHESDA
SOFTWARE

ISSUE 24

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The Elder Scrolls Adventures REDGUARD



THE ORIGIN OF CYRUS!



THE STORY THUS FAR....

Now:

A MAN CALLED TIBER SEPTIM SEEKS TO RESTORE THE GLORY OF THE CYRODILIC EMPIRE, WHICH HAS LAIN DORMANT FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS. HE WILL USHER IN A NEW ERA, THE AGE OF THE THIRD EMPIRE.

THE EMPIRE'S FORMER SUBJECT-LANDS HAVE TRIED TO RESIST THIS CHANGE, BUT, ONE BY ONE, THEY HAVE FALLEN. ALL OF THE HUMAN KINGDOMS ARE NOW UNDER SEPTIM'S RULE: SKYRIM, HIGH ROCK, AND HAMMERFELL, THE HOMELAND OF THE REDGUARDS.

IT HAS BEEN CONJECTURED THAT, HAD THEY NOT WEAKENED THEMSELVES IN THEIR CIVIL WAR, THE REDGUARDS COULD HAVE HALTED THE EMPIRE'S PROGRESS: THAT, UNITED HAMMERFELL WOULD BE INVINCIBLE.


ALAS, WITH THE DEATH OF THEIR HIGH KING, THE REDGUARDS' LONG-DIVIDED CAMPS, THE CROWNS AND THE FOREBEARS, WENT TO WAR. IN THE END, IT SEEMED LIKE THE CROWNS WOULD KEEP THE THRONE FOR THEMSELVES, BUT THE FOREBEARS, BEATEN AND WILLING TO TRY ANYTHING, INVITED THE EMPIRE'S FORCES INTO HAMMERFELL TO HELP THEM.

THE EMPIRE MADE SHORT WORK OF THE CROWNS' DIMINISHED FORCES, DEFEATING THEM AT LAST ON THE ISLAND OF STROS M'KAI.

Then:

IN THEIR YOUTH, CYRUS AND ISZARA LIVED IN SENTINEL, CAPITAL OF HAMMERFELL. THOUGH IT WAS TRADITIONALLY A FOREBEAR CITY, THE HIGH KING OF THE CROWNS SAT IN ITS PALACE. THIS WAS A TROUBLED TIME, WITH TALK OF OPEN REBELLION EVER IN THE AIR. WITH THE THIRD EMPIRE SUDDENLY STIRRING ON THE BORDERS, HAMMERFELL'S BREAKING POINT WAS NEAR.

AS A FOREBEAR SECESSION LOOMED, AND THEIR OLD CONQUERORS BEGAN TO SURROUND THEM, THE REDGUARDS PREPARED FOR WAR.



DYLXEXES THE YOUNGER, OF THE FIRST ERA, STATES
QUITE CLEARLY THAT AN ADVENTURE CAN ONLY TRULY
BEGIN THREE WAYS: BY DEATH, BY SLUR, OR BY LETTER.

TO BEGIN WITHOUT ONE OF
THESE IS TO BE RELEGATED TO
THE STATUS OF AN INDISCRETION
OR, AT BEST, AN ESCAPE.

WORDS

MICHAEL KIRKBRIDE

PENCILS

JOHN PEARSON

INKS

HUGH RILEY

COLORS

LOUISE SANDOVAL

LETTERS

COMIC SANS MS

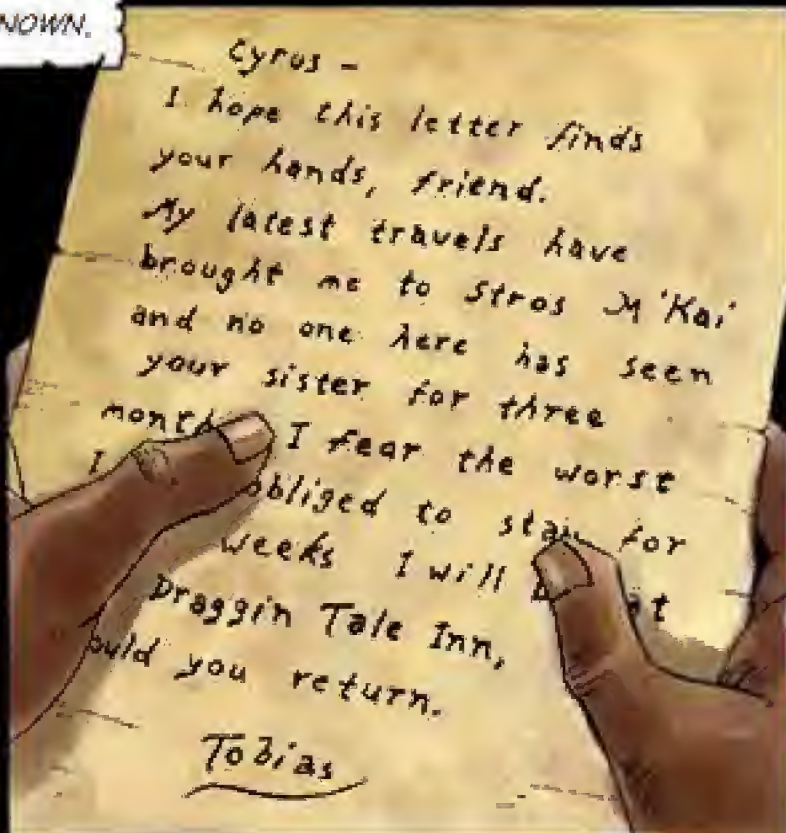
PROPERLY THEN DO WE EMBARK, OUR FOUNDATION
LAID WITH THE LAST, AND BEST, OF THE THREE:
THE LETTER, INVARIABLY THE MOST SEDUCTIVE
CATALYST OF ALL--

--AND THUS THE MOST POWERFUL.

ESPECIALLY IF IT CONCERNS THE BLOOD.



WRITTEN WITHOUT FLOURISH IN A HAND WELL-KNOWN.



IT'S GETTING A
BIT ROUGH OUT THERE,
SIR...?

CYRUS.



OF COURSE.
PERHAPS WE SHOULD
WAIT, THEN,
SIR CYRUS.

UNTIL TOMORROW
WHEN THE ILIAC IS MORE
COOPERATIVE.





NO,
WE GO ON.

YOU WERE
PAID DOUBLE
TO MAKE SURE.



FINE. WET GOLD SPENDS
AS WELL, I SUPPOSE

WHO'S GUIDING
THE SHIP,
CAPTAIN BRENNAN?



ELI, THE GOOD WATER-LOGGED LAD.
BOY NEEDS A BIT MORE WEIGHT ANYWAY.

STROS M'KAI
BY MORNING,
CAPTAIN.



OF COURSE, SIR CYRUS.
BUT TELL ME,
WHY ALL THE HURRY?



WHY THE HURRY, LADDIE?





IT IS OPENING NIGHT AND THEIR FATHER'S FARED WELL.

THE CROWD IS LARGE AND LOUD WITH LAUGHTER--

A TESTAMENT TO HIS WIT AND SKILL: A CROWN PLAY-WRIGHT IN A FOREBEAR CITY, AND HE'S BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE.

SENTINEL BELONGS TO HIM--

THERE IS A CLAMOR FOR HOURS--

--ALL STAGE SWORDS AND FLASH--

--WHEREIN THE HIGH KING, EVER A CROWN, PAYS HEAVILY FOR HIS FAULTS--

--POLITICAL, ANCESTRAL, AND OTHERWISE--

--AND THE FOREBEARS ARE SHOOK WITH SMILES--

--IN LOVE WITH THE THING.



THE STICK ABOUT THE HEAD OF
THE ENEMY, RELENTLESS.

IN THE CENTER, THOUGH, THE
DEAD SERIOUS HEART OF ALL
COMEDY: THE POINT--

ALL TOO OFTEN, LIKE
THIS NIGHT, MISSED
COMPLETELY.



ONLY AN UNBRIDLED AND OPEN
LOYALTY COULD HAVE PRODUCED
SUCH AS THIS IS--

--THE BELITTLED KING--

--SO UTTERLY BELOVED--

SO HERE IS THEIR FATHER'S REAL
TRIUMPH-- A CELEBRATION OF A
CROWN BY THE VERY CITY THAT HATES
HIM-- A JESTER'S BEST PARABOLA--

-- A SATIRE REFRACTED--

--OF FOOLS ONLY TO THE FOOLISH.



FOR CYRUS THE ONLY
GLITTERING THINGS
ARE THE SWORDS.

FOR ISZARA--

--THE MALE LEAD--

--CLAD IN FOREBEAR STRIPES--

--HIS FOOT IN THE ASS OF
OF THE HIGH KING'S HORSE.

HIS NAME IS HAKAN AND THEY WILL MARRY.





MY HURRY NEEDN'T
CONCERN YOU, CAPTAIN.

I'LL HAZARD IT'S THE
CIVIL WAR, OR THE
EMPIRE.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT EITHER.

TROUBLE IN THE
HEARTLAND. THAT'S MY
GUESS, ANYWAY....

IF IT SUITS YOU.

no one has seen
your sister for
three months




YOUR SISTER'S DISAPPEARANCE DRAWS A SHUDDER.

I NEED
A SHIP.

THE PORT IS FULL OF THEM AND
S'RATHRA'S NAME GOES FAR
TOWARDS THE PRICE OF PASSAGE.


MONEY, TOO.





«KEEP DUADEEN'S RETAINER.
IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR,
AFTER ALL.»

«TELL S'RATHRA, WHY
DID YOU NEVER MENTION
YOUR SISTER BEFORE..?»



«WHAT KIND?»


WE HAVEN'T SPOKEN
IN TEN YEARS. THERE
WAS TROUBLE.

I KILLED HER HUSBAND.




INVARIABLY THE MOST SEDUCTIVE.

ESPECIALLY WHEN IT CONCERNS THE BLOOD.



'EY, IT'S THE
REDGUARD--!

WHERE'RE YOU
GOIN'? WE LEAVE
SOON.



TELL YOUR LORD I RESPECTFULLY
DECLINE HIS OFFER.

TELL HIM YOURSELF.



DUADEEN.

I MUST AWAY
ELSEWHERE IT
SEEMS....

I HAVE A
SIGNATURE
SOMEWHERE...

-- THAT SAYS
OTHERWISE.

MY SISTER'S
GONE MISSING.

IS THAT ALL...?

TOO OPEN AN EXCUSE,
AND UNLIKELY.

THUGS MUSN'T HAVE TIES
TO ANYTHING BUT INK AND
THE GLIMMER OF GOLD.

YOU FORGET THE GENERAL
MYSTERY OF DANGEROUS MEN.

A SISTER'S SO DOMESTIC.

AYE.

MERCENARIES DON'T
HAVE FAMILIES.

THEN YOU WON'T BE MISSED.

I'M READY TO
KILL YOU ALL.

THAT WOULD BE
REDUNDANT.

MEN, LET HIM THROUGH.

DON'T COME BACK TO HIGH ROCK, CYRUS.

I CAN'T EVER COME BACK
TO HAMMERFELL, CAPTAIN.

EVENTUALLY, LAD.

SO BEGINS THE MERCENARY
TRANSLATION--

THEY WHISPER MORE THAN
HE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT.

THOUGH THEY DO NOT SCARE
HIM, HE WAITS MOSTLY IN
HUSH. SILENT EXCEPT TO
CONFIRM ORDERS.

AND THEY TAKE
WHAT GOLD
THEY CAN--

SOMEWHERE AN EMPEROR IS WAITING
TO CLEAR HIS THROAT--

THE WHOLE OF THE WORLD
IS IN TURMOIL IT SEEMS--

--AND EVERYONE
NEEDS A FEW
EXTRA SWORDS.

...WHO DO THEY
WANT US TO KILL?

ACH..I
PROBABLY SOMEONE
WHO'S DEAD,
ALREADY--

THEY WORK WHEREVER THEY CAN--
--IN ARGONIA, SAVING
DIPLOMACY'S FOOLS--

--SOME DIGNITARY SENT TO MAKE
A HASTY ALLIANCE AGAINST THE
INEVITABLE.

IMPERIAL EXPANSION.

I'M BETTIN' THEY
ATE 'IM DAYS AGO.

FOR YEARS THE CAT'S
ASSASSINS--

CYRUS DESPERATELY TRYING
TO DISPLACE THE GUILT OF
THE PAST IN THE BLOODY
DEEDS OF THE PRESENT--

--DOING WHATEVER
DIRTY WORK IS REQUIRED
OF THEM.

MORROWIND?
YOU'RE OUTTA YOUR
MIND--!

OH, BOY.

NO, MORE LIKE
GETTING BORED OF OUR
LITTLE BAND--

--TIME TO
GET RID OF THEM.

<S'RATHRA THOUGHT
YOU'D LIKE A CHANGE
OF PACE...>

<EXAGGERATION.>

I'LL GO.

FORGET IT,
CYRUS!

HE'S RIGHT, LAD.

<WEIRD IS RELATIVE.>

YOU DON'T
KNOW MORROWIND--

THE PLACE IS...
WEIRD--

THEY LOSE A FEW TO FEAR--

LAND OF THE DUNMER, THE
DARK ELVES....

--FOR IT IS
MORROWIND.



THE OBJECTIVE OF THE
RAID IS, FOR S'RATHRA,
CURIOUSLY SENTIMENTAL--

--FREE SOME KINSMEN
FROM A SLAVER CAMP.

PAID FOR BY
HIS OWN
WEALTH.



THE CAMP TO BE FOUND NEAR
TEAR, SOUTHERNMOST OF
MORROWIND'S HORRORS.



JUST ABOVE THE SWAMPS
OF BLACK MARSH--

-- IN THE LAND OF ASH.



WE COULD
TURN AROUND.

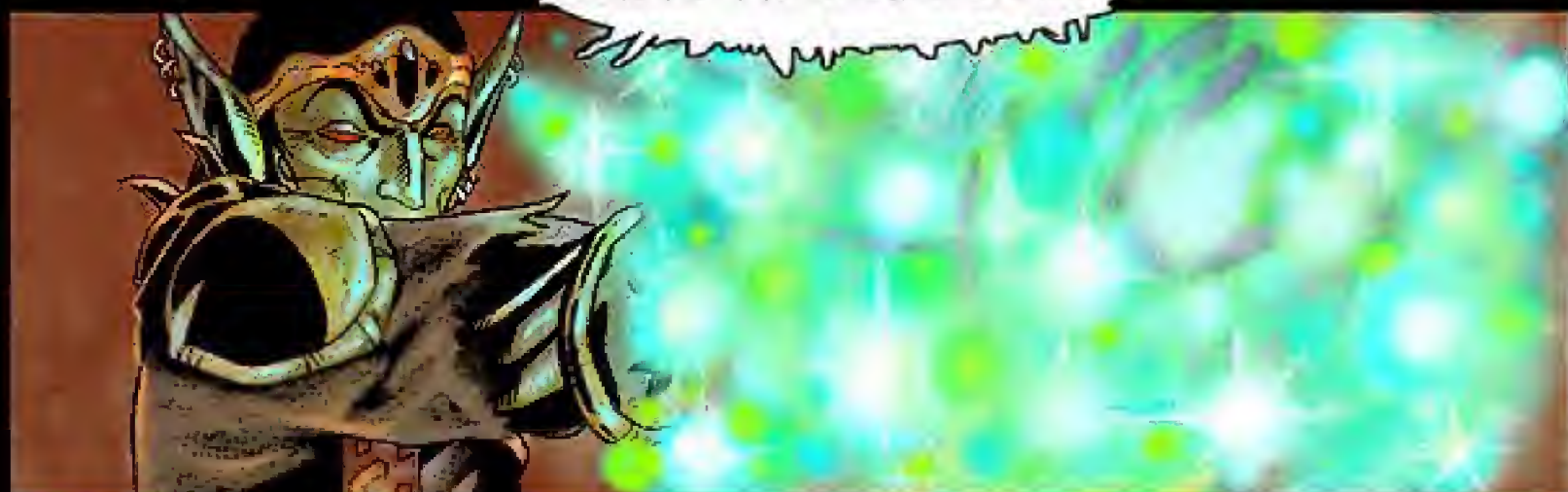
WHERE'S THE MONEY
IN THAT?







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SOMETHING IS SURPASSED IN THAT MOMENT. FROM THEN ON HE WILL WORK MORE OR LESS--

-ALONE

RESOLUTE IN THE MAD RUSH TO THAT WHICH HE CANNOT YET NAME.



...SIR CYRUS?

THE ISLAND'S IN SIGHT, SIR CYRUS. LET'S LET THE BOY GET SOME SLEEP.



STROS M'KAZI  
JEWEL OF HAMMERFELLI

GLAD TO BE BACK?



I WILL BE,  
IF I FIND HER.



HAVE YOU FOUND HER, THEN?

NO.





YES.

THERE, HAKAN.

THE WEDDING SEEMS, TO CYRUS--

--A WHOLE COUNTRY'S  
SIGH OF RELIEF--

--THOUGH HE KNOWS BOTH  
FAMILIES HAVE NAMES  
OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE.

BUT WITH HAMMERFELL ON THE  
BRINK OF CIVIL WAR:

A FOREBEAR IS TAKING  
THE HAND OF A CROWN  
IN THE CAPITAL CITY!

AND THOUGH EVERYONE KNOWS  
THERE IS NOTHING PROPHETIC  
ABOUT THE UNION--

--NOR IN ITS SIGHT SHALL  
THE KINGDOM TAKE MEASURE--

--FOR TO PERHAPS SIMILARLY ALIGN  
WITHIN AGAINST THE ENEMY WITHOUT,  
THERE IS STILL GENUINE AND HEARTFELT  
CHEER IN THE CROWD.

IT'S ALMOST AS IF SUCH CEREMONY  
MUST TAKE PLACE FOR THE FULL  
REGRET TO COME LATER--

A BRACE FOR THE KINGDOM'S  
SHAME, A SINGLE BRIGHT  
SPOT TO LOOK BACK ON--

--IN THE WAKE AND  
LAMENTATION OF  
THE END.

A HAPPINESS INVENTED--  
TO GIVE THE GRIEVING, LATER,  
MORE SORROW STILL.



THE JOY LASTS BUT FEW SEASONS. INITIALLY ALL IS WELL, WITH IZARA ONLY MOVING TO AN ESTATE ACROSS TOWN IN THE MERCHANT QUARTER.

THOUGH SHE IS HAPPY WITH HAKAN--

--HE IS OFTEN GONE.

TRAINING WITH THE FOREBEAR UNDERGROUND.

EVERYWHERE, A LOUDER TALK OF TROUBLE.

OF SENTINEL'S SECESSION.

IZARA'S DISTRESS BEGINS SLOW. SHE AND HAKAN ARE WISE ENOUGH--

CLOSE ENOUGH THAT CYRUS CAN STILL KEEP HER COMPANY.

--NOT TO MENTION THE MATTER TO HER FATHER WHEN THEY VISIT.



HIS OWN PATRIOT  
SHADE RUNS DEEP.



CYRUS DOESN'T CARE, AND HASSLES  
HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW TO NO END  
TO SHOW HIM THE SWORD TRICKS  
THAT HAVE BEEN LEARNED WHILE  
PREPARING THE HIDDEN MILITIAS.



MORE EXCITING THAN WORKING  
THE HARBORS, THAT'S FOR SURE,  
THESE RUMORS OF WAR.



HAKAN TAKES NOTICE, AND CONFIDES  
IN HIS NEW STUDENT THE TRUE  
NATURE OF THE FOREBEAR CAUSE.



WE ARE THE RIGHTEOUS  
FOUNDATION UPON WHICH  
THIS COUNTRY RESTS.



AND WE HAVE TOO LONG  
SUFFERED ITS WEIGHT.

WHERE DID YOU  
HEAR THIS?

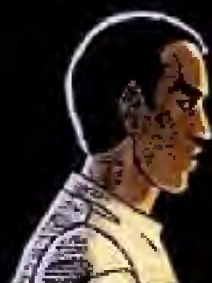




AND WHY WOULD YOU SHAME YOUR ANCESTORS SO? WE ARE CROWNS, CYRUS, AND THE WEIGHT THEY SPEAK OF IS THE KING, A NOBLE BURDEN TO BE SURE.



BUT YOU MAKE FUN OF THE KING IN EVERYTHING YOU'VE WRITTEN.



SON.

SO THE FOREBEARS ARE RIGHT IN NOTHING?

IN COMPLAINT? YES.

IN DEMAND FOR RAPPROCHEMENT?

IN SOME CASES.



MY MOCKERY OF HIM IS THE MOCKERY OF THE MOCKERY OF HIS ENEMIES.

IN SECESSION? NEVER. IT IS NOT THE WAY FOR US.

AND IT WILL NOT BE THE WAY FOR YOU.

AND IF THE KING IS CHALLENGED WE--I, YOU, YOUR SISTER, OTHERS-- SHALL RISE ALIKE AS HE TO MEET IT--

NAHA 'MEI DOGO RA GADA LONHE TRAI, SURA.

--FOR WE ARE CROWNS ALIKE AS HE.

WHAT..?





IT MEANT, 'THE FOREBEARS KNOW THEIR PLACE, CYRUS.'  
AND IT WILL BE THE LAST TIME HE IS UNCLEAR.  
HE WRITES IT IN A NIGHT...



IT IS AN EPIC OF THE RA GADA--  
THE ANCESTORS OF THE FOREBEARS--  
FROM WHOM THE REDGUARDS GOT  
THEIR NAME--

A BLOODY AND THRILLING ACCOUNT OF  
THAT HOLY INVASION, WHERE THE  
RA GADA DROVE THE ORCS FROM HAMMER-  
FELL TO MAKE WAY FOR THE KING AND  
HIS ROYAL FAMILY--

A STORY THREE THOUSAND YEARS OLD--

WHEREIN THE FOREBEARS ARE CAST  
RIGHTLY IN THE ROLES OF HEROES--

--STALWART FIRST CHAMPIONS OF  
THE THRONE, AND THE KING'S FINEST,  
BEST MEN.

AND WHERE THE KING IS A MAN  
WORTH FIGHTING FOR.

THERE IS NONE OF THE COMEDY FOR  
WHICH THE AUTHOR IS KNOWN, ONLY  
A CELEBRATION OF THE TRUTH  
OF OLD BLOOD--

--AND THE LINES THEY HAVE  
SINCE ESTABLISHED.

THERE IS NO SUBTLETY IN THE MESSAGE.

JUST ADMONITION FROM AN HONORABLE PAST.





HIS SHORTEST WORK IS  
THE WIDEST SEEN--

AND IT HAS IMMEDIATE EFFECTS.

THE REDGUARDS ARE REMINDED OF  
WHEN THEY STOOD TOGETHER  
AGAINST THE UNKNOWN.

AND WITH THE EMPIRE AS CLOSE AS  
SANCRE TOR, AND EVEN BENDING THE  
NORD KINGS TO THEIR WILL--

--THE REDGUARDS WONDER WHEN  
HAMMERFELL'S TIME WILL COME.

BARON VOLAG, HOLDER OF SENTINEL'S  
OUTLYING TERRITORIES, AND THE  
CHOSEN SPOKESMAN OF THE FOREBEARS,  
STRIKES AN ACCORD WITH THE KING.

WITH THE CROWNS.

SOME SAY IT IS AN EPHEMERAL TRUCE--

--THAT WILL LAST ONLY SO LONG AS THE  
OLD FEELINGS STIRRED BY AN EMBROIDERED  
HISTORY STAY STRONG.

BUT IT WORKS FOR A MEASURE--

--AND THE MILITIAS DISBAND TO  
JOIN VOLAG'S MEN IN THE PLAINS OF  
THE DRAGON STAND.

AND FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT  
GO, IT TURNS BITTER.

A SLOW ROT THAT REALIZES  
IT'S BEEN MADE TO MARRY THE  
THE DEVIL'S OWN DAUGHTER.



A CELEBRATION OF THE PLAYWRIGHT  
IS HELD, AND THE CROWNS AND  
FOREBEARS ATTEND IN EQUAL NUMBERS--

DRINKS AND LAUGHTER AND THE SENSE  
OF SOMETHING LIFTED--



CYRUS IS DRUNK TO HERE, IN SUCH  
GOOD SPIRITS THAT HE MENTIONS  
NOTHING ABOUT HAKAN'S STRANGE  
ABSENCE TO ISZARA.

INDEED, A ROCK THAT'S BEEN LIFTED.

AND THE SNAKES HAVE SCURRIED OUT.

TUKTA-MAB'RO \*

G'YE\*\*

NO LO'IGRA\*\*\*

\*STORYTELLER

\*\*FABRICATOR

\*\*\*DECEIVER

LIAR.



HAKAN, NOT THIS--

SO IT BEGINS--





THE CIVIL WAR THEY THOUGHT SUPPRESSED, EMBODIED  
NOW IN THE DRUNKEN YOUTHS BEFORE THEM.



IN THIS ONE DUEL THEY SEE  
THE INEVITABILITY OF  
WHAT WILL COME.



IN EACH CHAMPION--



--THE ARMIES THEY WILL SIDE WITH.

SOONER OR LATER EVERYTHING  
BROUGHT TO STAVE OFF THIS FATE.



WILL BE CUT DOWN.





RUN, HE THINKS

IT'S ALL HE CAN THINK



... ACH ...  
GET ON, THEN ...



I CAN'T EVER COME BACK  
TO HAMMERFELL, CAPTAIN.



EVENTUALLY, LAD.

NEXT ISSUE: THE SEARCH FOR ISZARA BEGINS!